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always sound, and while her neighbors were yielding to the imposture of fanatic minds, her faith in reason and Christianity remained unshaken. It is, indeed, instructive to see how, even in the darker periods of her history, she sought to introduce the mechanical arts, to develop her internal resources, to encourage commerce, to establish a liberal and enlightened system of intercourse with other nations, to make science, art, and literature work out their grandest problems for the benefit of her civilization, as she then understood it.

We shall return to this volume in our next issue. In the meantime we would say to the student of history, as well as to the general reader, that they will find "The Empire of Russia" both invaluable and interesting.

Sylvia's World. By the author of "Busy Moments of an Idle Woman," "Lily," etc. Derby & Jackson, New York.

Our readers are mostly of an amiable turn, and have a rare love for the sparkling. If, however, any of them be courageous enough to undertake the reading of the dullest book within our knowledge, we would recommend "Sylvia's World." It is a melancholy example of a wearisome and very trashy book—a book which we venture to assert only a New York publisher could have been found good-natured enough to undertake. We never see so much good paper and binding wasted without a pang of regret—regret that the volume is a proof of the intellectual inferiority of our authors when compared with those of other nations, and regret that we have publishers who will permit ambitious females to practise such jokes on our literary reputation. No doubt the author intended well, and therein we can sympathize with her, and regret the weakness which prompted her to make such a pitiful show of her shortcomings, as well as her contempt for all the rules of authorship. We must not forget to mention that "Sylvia's World" is a novel of 884 pages, 212 of which make up one long, dreary and unbroken chapter—enough to send one into a state of melancholy for at least a week, even in fine weather. As for plot, there is not the shadow of one that we could discern. The characters, which the author would have us believe are all ladies and gentlemen, talk very vulgarly at times, and indeed in a style we at the North are not accustomed to hear, though, for all we know, it may be quite common in the South. Let us admit, however, that the book may be extremely useful to ladies in robust health, young ladies about to try their hand at novel writing, and clergymen about to preach probationary sermons.

Beulah: A Novel. By Augusta J. Evans. Derby & Jackson, New York.

One finds relief in turning from so feeble and dull—an effort at authorship as "Sylvia's World," to a work so rich of fine, subtle, nervous energy, so impressive in its teachings, so radiant of the good that flows from an earnest heart, so powerfully written, and so healthy of tone, as *Beulah*. Its pictures, if not always painted with the strictest regard to nature, are at least handled with great delicacy. Indeed, we have in *Beulah*, if not a great work, at least one that discovers in the author a well balanced mind, capable of deep thought, and of producing something greater in the future. That the action of that mind is at times impaired by a strong inclination to melancholy, is too apparent to be overlooked. This being Miss Evans' first book, we predict for her a bright future in authorship, since it is rather what *Beulah* promises than what *Beulah* is as an achievement. Some of our contemporaries urge that *Beulah* is a perfect, and even a great novel. With this we cannot

agree. The book possesses all the merits we have ascribed to it, deep thought, pathos, the earnestness of a heart and soul bent on doing good, and a purpose high and noble. But Miss Evans is not skilled in novel writing. As a literary artist she by no means rises above mediocrity. The faults of *Beulah* are those of a builder rather than a designer. For admitting that the book contains much true poetry, deep pathos, and even fine fiction, it is faulty in construction while the plot, which is feeble indeed, is badly conceived and clumsily developed. However much we may be inclined to praise the author's command of logic and descriptive powers, we cannot speak unqualifiedly of her dialogue, which not only lacks light and shade, but is dull and even tedious at times. Most of her characters are either pious, stern, or eccentric; young or old, they unfortunately all talk like highly educated people, and with an air of seriousness scarcely reconcilable with their age or condition in life. But these, it must be borne in mind, are faults that can be easily remedied, and we have referred to them in the spirit of friendship rather than censure. Nor would the author lose anything with her readers if she would study authors less and human nature more. Readers prefer the rich and varied fruits of a clever author's mind, and care but little how much they have studied the works of others, nor how deep they may have delved into the mysteries of sectarianism.

Out of the Depths; or, The Story of a Woman's Life. W. A. Townsend & Co.

This is a reprint of an English work—the history of a frail woman, who has been low down in the depths of a life of shame, repented and become a Christian. The book has given rise to much diversity of opinion among English critics, not only as to its literary merits, but its influence on society. The religious press becomes its advocate, unites in praising the object and spirit of the writer, and concludes by commanding it to the perusal of all as a missionary that cannot fail to do good. Secular journals like the Saturday Review and Athenaeum wage a fierce war against it, declaring it an unfit book to place in the hands of young females. The book probably had its origin in the recent movement in England to devise means for the suppression of the crime of prostitution. It is written with great power, and although the story is that of a frail woman's life, such is the delicacy with which the author (evidently skilled in composition) draws the picture that not even the most fastidious could find in it a line to cause a blush. It is a simple story—a story any of the denizens of Little Portland street might make her own—well told, and true to the life. Keeping the motive in view, as well as the spirit of purity that pervades the book, we can even overlook the straining after religious sentimentality which detracts from the interest of the latter portion of the work.

A Life for a Life. By Miss Muloch. Harper & Brothers.

To our way of thinking, this volume is not equal, either in literary merit or interest, to John Halifax. And yet it is a bold, instructive, and even fascinating book, with pictures of English life drawn by the hand of an artist. There is the same clear insight into human nature, the same clever dissecting of its most eccentric elements, the same graceful and pure style, that distinguish all we get from the pen of this gifted lady. The readers of John Halifax will find in this book an entirely new field for the exercise of their admiration.